

Thus spoke Vadiraja Tirtha II.

The value of travel as enriching human experience was fully recognised in Ancient India. In the Harischandra Upakhyaṇa in the Aitareya Brahmana, (the story herein being different from the Harischandra of the Puranas) we read

आदत्ते भग आसीनस्य ऊर्ध्वदिक्षति तिष्ठतः।

ज्ञाते विपद्यमानस्य परगतिं परतो भगः॥

That the luck of a man sits if he sits, it gets up if he gets up, it will sleep if he is disposed to be lazy and move (progressively) if the person is always on the move. Our ancestors cleverly arranged that the pilgrim centres which every one of us should visit to cleanse our body of physical impurities were always places where Nature showered her choicest gifts of lovely scenes or confluences of rivers or mountainous tracts where, far from the maddening crowds of noble strife, our minds could get ample spiritual solace and could concentrate on the Lord who is the creator and controller of this wonderful world. Sri Vadiraja Swami, like so many other messengers of the Timeless who had brought messages of hope to us, evading and sinning humans, travelled all over Bharata Varsha on foot, paying his homage to the various deities enshrined in the temples in the western (from where he hailed), northern, eastern and southern sections of his pilgrim guide. Let us now here how he worships the Supreme God Sri Krishna installed by his Guru Madhwa:

निर्मथोग्रभरणैर्निजमनोऽभीष्टं दिशामीति यः

वस्य गङ्गा पयितुं करेण विलसन्मन्थनमन्थनं च

रम्यं दाम दधन्महेश्वरजतमामाश्रितोऽलङ्कृतः

कर्मन्दोऽश्वरभक्तिवन्धनवदाः प्रीतोऽस्तु कृष्णः प्रभुः

In the opening verses, he has already referred to the way in which the Supreme Lord preferred to come over to the place where his greatest devotee of the Kaliyuga installed him in Mahesha Rajata grāma, the village of silver dedicated so far to another equally great devotee Mahesha or Siva. This village, first known as Shivabelli or the silver of Shiva in the local dialect, became corrupted into Shivalli, is also known as Udupi after the moon's temple in the centre. The moon decorates Shiva's head and the moon is the Lord of the Stars; the word for star is udu and their lord is Udupa and the city which owes its existence to him is called Udupi. (The postal spelling adopted now, UDUPI has no meaning at all and should be corrected, the sooner, the better). We might here quote the particular verse of Vadiraja:

द्वारावती सकल भगवन्तीमुपेक्ष्य गोपाल बालकलनाकर-  
पूजनं च ।

वर्धिं वधू गृह मतीत्यं मध्वनाथो यत्रास्ति तद्रजनपीठपुर

(Dvanaka) गरीयः ॥

Śrī Krishna deserted his own city, where he had lived for a long time. He cared not for the worship of the Gopis also; even his father-in-law's house, the ocean also lost all its charms for him. Madhwa, his greatest devotee called him to live in his place of birth, Shivalli village or Silver Village. So this town of Udupi is the most praiseworthy place on the earth. We have already quoted the verse of Saint Vadiraja just now. Its purport can be explained now. Why does this image of Śrī Krishna, installed by Nityananda, have a churning rod (= Manthana) in his hand? It is to make his devotees fully realise that he is ever ready to answer their calls, to fulfil all their desires, in spite of the fact that they may be tossed up and down in this grim world of births and deaths every minute; the churning handle indicates that he is eager to churn it and destroy it for us if only we show that we



deserve it. The butter that is churned is the fulfilment of our desires which we can confidently look up to as His blessing. The small and the lovely rope <sup>round his stomach</sup> might indicate that He allows himself to be bound by the Bhakti of the eight Svamis that worship Him in rotation, every one getting his turn for two years; Yashoda, His mother had tied Him with such a small rope when He was a Baby, as the Bhagavata Purana narrates it. Such a Lord has now chosen to be the ornament of the village that belonged to Shiva but now to Krishna. The 99 verses of the Paschimā Prabandha describe

the 20 pilgrim centres - 1) Rudupi in Parashurāma Kshetra 2) Netravati and Kumārāshāra rivers 3) Subrahmanya 4) Payasvini river <sup>and Swarnā river</sup> 5) Kumbhāsī Kshetra (where the saint was born) 6) Koteswara Kshetra 7) Shankaranarayana Kshetra and Kolhuru 8) Sahyādri range 9) Harihara Kshetra 10) Bidarhalli Ashvaththa Narayana 11) Bankapura Keshava (as this temple had inspired his contemporary and friend Kanaka) 12) Varenda river 13) Banavāsi Maadhukeshwara 14) Sode Kshetra (which provided the name for his Matha as it was his favourite resort for his meditations) 15) Gokarna 16) Kolhapur 17) Prabhāsa 18) Dvārakā 19) Bindusaras 20) Pushkara. A glance at the map, will show that the saint started from Rudupi, <sup>and</sup> proceeded south <sup>(104 miles)</sup> till Subrahmanya. Having secured the permission of Parāshurama and Subrahmanya <sup>and</sup> Skanda, the guardian saints, whose traditions reports, are practising penance even today, the saint started on his tour. He has also worshipped the birthplace of Maadhvāchārya in Pajakak Kshetra, where on a small hill consecrated to Durgā (called Kunjaaru in Kannada) there is a famous temple; the saint secured their blessings for the successful termination of his contemplated tour. The seven famous pilgrim centres in Parashurama Kshetra, Rudupi, Subrahmanya, Kumbhāsī, Koteswara, Kroda Shankara-Narayana, Gokarna, Mookaamba (or Kollooru in Kannada) are described. Towards the end of this first chapter, Prabhāsa (88<sup>th</sup> verse) and Dvārakā (90<sup>th</sup> verse) are described. This first Prabhāsa Kshetra is also famous as Dehātarga Kshetra as Krishna cast off His mortal body when He



was hit on the foot by a hunter who mistook it for a deer.  
Somanath Jyotirlinga, which was destroyed by Muslim  
Vandals under Mahammad of Ghazni <sup>(1025 A.D.)</sup>, seems to have  
been rebuilt; we have to proceed from Ahmedabad by  
train to Veraval from which place this temple of Somanath  
is 3 miles distant.

The Uttara Prabandha in 46 Plokas seems to be  
mainly dedicated to the holy rivers Krishna, Godavari,  
Ganga and Yamunā, four of the seven sacred rivers  
in Bharatavarsha: गंगे च यमुने चैव गोदावरी सरस्वति ।  
नर्मदे चिन्त्ये कावेरि जले सन्निधिं कुरु ॥ Among  
these, it is well known that Sarasvati is called गुह्यवाहिनी  
or flowing secretly and washes its waters, as recorded in  
tradition, into the Ganges at Prayāga. So while describing  
in Verses 13 and 14, we can also say that Sarasvati is also  
indirectly described - जम्भारज्ये सरस्वती इनतनयासंगेव गंगाम्  
is the latter half of verse 16 and means 'Ganga seems  
to have the contact with Sarasvati and Yamunā (who  
it might be incidentally noted is Yama's sister). The river  
Ganga, usually described as Tripāthasā, as coursing through  
the heaven, earth and netherworld, is described in the  
previous three lines of the same (16th) thus by our Saint:

आदौ पादतलेर्ध्वभागमहसा या रक्तनीला हरेः  
सर्गस्त्री कुचकुङ्कुमांकनयनेपान्तधियाऽभ्यन्तरे ।

अन्ते द्वाभ्युपययन्तगगत-क्षुणीज्वरज्योतिषा  
जम्भारज्ये सरस्वतीनतनया संगेव गङ्गास्ति सा ॥

The idea in the Verse is: the reddish waters of the river  
Sarasvati, black waters of the Yamuna, and the white  
waters of the Ganga are all blended in this Triveni. This  
triple colour, according to the fancy of the poet-saint is  
also found in the holy feet of Brīman Vishnu from where  
the river takes its rise; there the colour is reddish; in  
the heavenly regions, because of the Apsaras who  
paint their breast reddish with Kashmir saffron taking  
their bath, mixed with the white natural colour of the Ganga;  
even on the black matted locks of hair, being mingled  
with the bluish colour of the serpent on the neck of  
the great Lord Shambhu, the triple colour is found.



in all the three regions, making us feel that there is the triple stream confluence almost everywhere. The Sindhu and the Kaveri are the only two rivers omitted in this second Prabandha; the latter receives the saint's worship in the appropriate context in the Dakshina Prabandha Verse 10. Thus the Indus alone is omitted, perhaps because of the fact that the saint could not go there as Muslims had their sway there in the Swamiji's time in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The famous places like Pandharapur, Kashi, Gaya, Mathura, Vrindavan, Ayodhya, Naimisharanya, Hastinapur (the remains of the palaces of the Pandavas are seen even now), Kurukshetra and Badari are described in 26 verses.

The third, Purva Prabandha in 43 verses, describes the third, Purva Prabandha in 43 verses, describes the rivers Tunga and Bhadra, the Pampa Kshetra, Tirupati, the famous Mukti conferring city of Canjeevaram (Kanchi as then known), the Tejalinga Arunachaleshwara (Tiruvannamalai as now known in Tamil), and Kumbhakonam. The last section of Dakshina Prabandha, in 43 verses, starts with the description of Srirangam Ranganatha, proceeding to Ramasetu in Rameshwara, Dhanushkoti, Tamraparni river, Kanyakumari, and ends with a glorious tribute to Anantapadmanabha (as already quoted).

Thus among the seven mukti conferring cities, viz, Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya, Kashi, Kanchi, Avantika and Dvaravati, the cities omitted are Maya (Haridwar) and Avantika or Ujjain. Even the Southern Madurai with its famous Meenakshi Temple which must have also been celebrated at the time, seems to have been missed in his itinerary. The reason for the omission seems to be that they were exclusively Saivite shrines; though Maya is famous as the place where Narada heard the Bhagavata Purana narrated in 7 days by the Saptarishi, the Goddess enshrined in the temple holds a Trishoola or trident in her hand besides having human skulls about her. Avantika is the temple of Mahakala, a Shaiva god. Of course Krishna and Balarama are spoken of as having met the blessed <sup>fine</sup> in as many days from their preceptor Saandee



here accessions to the Bhagavata. Madurai Meenakshi  
 is it is well known, is the wife of Sundareswara. That  
 again seems to be the reason why Vadriaji Swami  
 cuts off Chidambaram, though it is famed as Akasle  
 linga, enshrining the Lord Nataraja or Dancing Siva.  
 Of course, some Vaishnavite shrines as that in Totyadi  
 (about 20 miles from Tinnevely) are also omitted  
 as the same might not have acquired sufficient  
 prominence or might be a sacred shrine only for Sri  
 Vaishnavas of the Ramanuja community. However  
 Kumbhakonam Sharangapani is worshipped with  
 reverence. The places where Madhwa saints like Raghoo-  
 thama Swami are enshrined as Tirukkoilur, Nava-  
 Vrindavanam (verse 17), Jayakirta (8th) naturally  
 receive very high veneration. It must also be emphasized  
 that Madhwas are not at all bigoted in their outlook  
 and Shiva is always honoured, though only as the  
 greatest devotee of the Supreme Vishnu. Banavasi  
 Madhukeshwara and Vishwanatha in yellow (about  
 10 or 12 miles from Udipi) are some other temples of Shiva  
 where our saint has offered worship (singing as many  
 as 5 verses with the refrain श्रीशिवविभवाय - Resort to  
 Vishwanatha. Skanda and Ganapati are the two sons  
 of Shiva and they are also reverently worshipped in  
 Subrahmanya and Gokarna respectively.

Verse 8, Purva Prabandha provides a fitting  
 conclusion to our brief summary of his saints  
 Handbook. Herein Lord Nrisimha of Ahobala is  
 worshipped:

उद्यन्मध्वमतामुद्येन परितः संसारसंज्ञे वने  
 मायन्मायिमतङ्गमर्दनावेक्षो' सोऽहं सहायस्त्विति ।  
 हृयं क्षरन् सदृक्षतां वहति यस्तस्य द्वितीयोऽग्रहः

साजात्येन सदेति मानवतुलां पापान्दृष्टिः सनः  
 Our worldly life here is likened to a forest wherein  
 Narayana, compared with a lion seems to reassure  
 us saying: "my favourite animal in the form of the  
 religion preached by Madhwa will certainly kill the  
 Mayavadis stalking abroad as elephants."